

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. An electronic coupon issuing system configured so as to enable a coupon reception counter to use an issued electronic coupon via any kind of coupon reception means, the electronic coupon issuing system characterized by comprising:

an electronic coupon server having an electronic coupon generation approval registration means for registering information regarding approval of generation of the electronic coupon; an electronic coupon acquisition registration means for registering acquisition of the electronic coupon in association with ID information of an electronic coupon usage medium that is presented when the electronic coupon is used; and an electronic coupon search means for receiving the ID information of the electronic coupon usage medium and searching for an electronic coupon that is useable in connection with the ID information; and

an electronic coupon reception terminal for receiving the electronic coupon usage medium, and inquiring with the electronic coupon search means of the electronic coupon server whether an electronic coupon exists and at the same time approving the use of useable electronic coupons;

wherein the electronic coupon acquisition registration means of the electronic coupon server receives a request for acquisition of an electronic coupon from an electronic coupon registration terminal and registers electronic coupon acquisition information

association with the ID information of the electronic coupon usage medium; and

the electronic coupon search means receives the ID information of the electronic coupon medium and information regarding the intended use which have been sent from the electronic coupon reception terminal; performs searches to determine whether or not an electronic coupon useable for the ID information and for the intended use exists; and sends results from the search to the electronic coupon reception terminal.

2. An electronic coupon issuing system as claimed in claim 1, further characterized in that the electronic coupon server has an electronic coupon usage information accumulation means for accumulating the search results from the searches performed by the electronic coupon search means and accumulating electronic coupon usage information.

3. An electronic coupon issuing system as claimed in claim 1, further characterized in that the electronic coupon registration terminal is a mobile telephone or a computer which is connected to a network, or a digital broadcast reception terminal.

4. An electronic coupon issuing system as claimed in claim 1, further characterized in that the electronic coupons used by the electronic coupon reception terminal are any of a variety of discounts, any of a variety of benefits, or any of a variety of tickets.

5. An electronic coupon issuing system as claimed in claim 1, further characterized in that the electronic coupon reception terminal has a function of printing out and using the electronic coupon.

6. An electronic coupon issuing system as claimed in claim 5, further characterized in that the electronic coupon reception terminal prints out the electronic coupon as a bar code and uses the bar code.

7. An electronic coupon issuing system as claimed in claim 1, further characterized in that the electronic coupon usage medium is a credit card, a debit card, any of a variety of point-accumulation cards or any of a variety of mileage accumulation cards.

8. An electronic coupon issuing system as claimed in claim 7, further characterized in that the electronic coupon usage medium is a credit card and the electronic coupon reception terminal serves as a credit settlement terminal, and this electronic coupon reception terminal is connected to the electronic coupon server via a credit settlement center or via a relay center relaying to a credit card settlement center.

9. An electronic coupon issuing system as claimed in claim 8, further characterized in that the electronic coupon reception terminal simultaneously dispatches a search for the electronic coupon and a request for approval for a credit card settlement, and when the electronic coupon is useable for a discount, the

electronic coupon reception terminal sends out a second request for a credit settlement at a discounted price.

10. An electronic coupon issuing system as claimed in claim 8, further characterized in that the electronic coupon reception terminal and the credit card settlement center or relay center which relays to the credit card settlement center are connected wirelessly.

11. An electronic coupon issuing method configured so as to enable a coupon reception counter to use an issued electronic coupon via any kind of coupon reception means, the electronic coupon issuing method being characterized by: registering approval information for generation of the electronic coupon; receiving a request for acquisition of the electronic coupon and registering electronic coupon acquisition information in association with ID information of the electronic coupon usage medium; and, upon reception of the electronic coupon usage medium, performing a search to determine whether there exists an electronic coupon that makes the electronic coupon usage medium usable, and approving the use of the electronic coupon usage medium in the case that a usable electronic coupon exists.

12. An electronic coupon issuing method as claimed in claim 11, further characterized by accumulating electronic coupon usage information.

13. An electronic coupon issuing method as claimed in claim 11, further characterized by registration of the electronic coupons

being performed by a mobile telephone or a computer which is connected to a network, or by a digital broadcast reception terminal.

14. An electronic coupon issuing method as claimed in claim 11, further characterized in that the electronic coupon is any of a variety of discounts, benefits or tickets.

15. An electronic coupon issuing method as claimed in claim 11, further characterized in that the electronic coupon is printed out and used.

16. An electronic coupon issuing method as claimed in claim 15, further characterized in that the electronic coupon is printed out and used as a bar code.

17. An electronic coupon issuing method as claimed in claim 11, further characterized in that the electronic coupon usage medium is a credit card, debit card, any of a variety of point accumulation cards or any of a variety of mileage accumulation cards.

18. An electronic coupon issuing method as claimed in claim 17, further characterized in that the electronic coupon usage medium is a credit card and the credit card settlement terminal serves to perform reception of the electronic coupon.

19. An electronic coupon issuing method as claimed in claim 18, further characterized by performing the reception of the electronic coupon and the credit card settlement simultaneously, and performing the credit card settlement at a discounted price when an electronic coupon for a discount is usable.